

Woman Who, When a Child, Made Lincoln's Statue Has Vivid Memory of Him

Vinnie Ream Hoxey Was a Girl of Sixteen When "Old Abe," in the Last Five Months of His Life, Gave Her Many Sitzings.

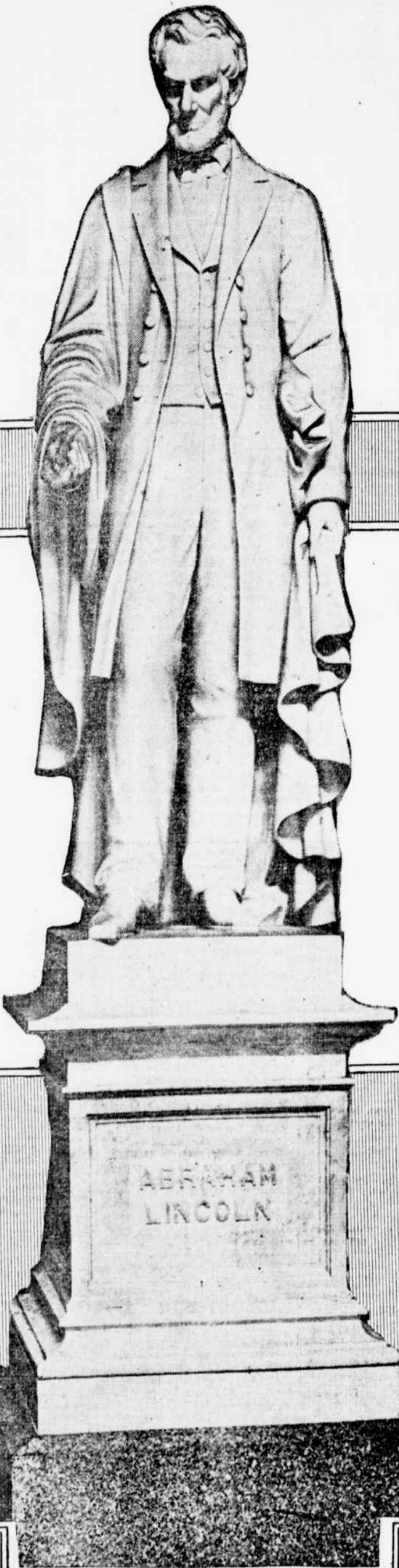
By William Atherton Du Fur.

IN those dark days of '65, when the weight of reconstruction bore down upon the fragile figure of Abraham Lincoln and added its stupendous burden to a private grief occasioned by the loss of his favorite child, there came each day to his office a slip of a girl. The girl was Vinnie Ream. She was a tiny wisp of a creature, sixteen years old, then entirely unknown to fame. Her parents were poor and she had little training toward the accomplishment of the thing that stuck in her heart. For Vinnie Ream was to be a sculptor. Later great successes came her way, and to-day as Vinnie Ream Hoxey she tells the impressions of Lincoln she received as a girl.

During those last five months of his life

the Spanish-American war, we happened to be stationed at Portland, Me. Admiral Cervera, the beaten commander of the Spanish naval forces, was then a captive of the United States government. This government and its people, however, insisted upon honoring that gallant naval officer, and refused to treat him as a prisoner of war. A great reception was given in his honor at Portland. When I shook his hand I told him that all America honored him even in his defeat. "But my country! Oh, my country!" exclaimed the admiral, as he hid his face in his handkerchief and wept. But the sorrow of neither of these great men of lost causes was comparable with the sorrow of Lincoln in the days of the success of the war which he had fought.

"As I have said, President Lincoln re-



After the Assassination of the "Emancipator," Congress Commissioned Her to Make His Effigy for Rotunda in Capitol.

was that she had been selected to make the statue of Lincoln.

The artist herself describes the years that followed in which she was accomplishing this great work, the joys of the labor, the atmosphere and the associations of the time.

"The room of the Committee on Mines and Minerals was tendered me as a studio because it was next to one occupied by Judge David Davis, of the Supreme Court, Lincoln's most intimate personal friend, and he was my constant associate, my adviser and critic in this sacred task. I had approached the work with reverence and with trembling hands, and had taken the proportions of the figure from the Woodstock garments that President Lincoln had worn on that last and fearful night. Altogether I worked six years on

and never such a studio in all the world, and never did an artist work in an atmosphere that was a greater stimulant."

Under such conditions and amid such historic surroundings grew the prototype in clay that was afterward carved in marble from the quarries of Carrara. For this purpose the model was conveyed to Rome and with a background of two national flags was placed in the studio, and artists of the time were invited to pass opinion on its merit. The artist Healy, who had painted Lincoln, was a close friend of Miss Ream and assisted her in the work. For this statue Congress had originally appropriated \$10,000 and to this it afterward added \$5,000 as a special mark of its approval of the work of the only woman who has ever received such a commission from Congress.



VINNIE REAM HOXEY OF TO-DAY.

the great President gave each day an hour to this young girl because she was poor and because she was ambitious. He sat for her that she might make a model of him, from which she later intended to reproduce a statue in marble that would give to the world in permanent form the likeness of this man who to her was the embodiment of all that is great and good. So with a girl's intuition Vinnie Ream sat through these last tragic months and looked upon the form and face of Abraham Lincoln, and that form and face grew upon her until it filled her very being. Then the great tragedy came, and this frail girl, shocked beyond measure by it, found for herself a sacred mission, for no other sculptor had the real Lincoln so in mind and no other living creature had Lincoln so engraved upon his heart that he might be carried down half a century to a generation then unborn. It is doubtful if any person living to-day has a more vivid personal recollection of Lincoln than Vinnie Ream Hoxey.

UNFATHOMABLE SORROW.

"The one great, lasting, all dominating impression of Lincoln that has always been with me," said Mrs. Vinnie Ream Hoxey, in her Washington home, the other day, "has been that of unfathomable sorrow. Lincoln was a man who had borne the weight of sorrow from his early life, and the sorrows multiplied as the end approached. When he was sitting for me there had just been added to his life the bitterest of all his bereavements, the loss of his favorite son, Willie."

"From the time I began to model Lincoln he made the time that I spent with him each day a period of rest. He always said that there was a feeling of relaxation that accompanied the sitting, and during that time he gave orders that he was not to be disturbed. I was tucked away in my corner of his office, so as to interfere little with whatever might be going on. Surely, the President could not have attributed much importance to my modelling, for I was so young and so much an amateur. Yet in those busy days of '65 I had an hour each day of the time of President Lincoln."

"Through much of this time he loitered at his desk, and during much of it he stood by his window and looked sorrowfully upon the world outside. I never saw him other than sad. The merry, story telling side of his nature was not for me. I always felt that this was because my hour with him was one of relaxation, when he fell into the mood that to him was natural. For, although he often forced himself from the shadow of his many sorrows, I am sure that the man as I saw him was the real Lincoln, and that a monumental melancholy always weighed upon his heart."

"Many times have I seen Lincoln weep. I was such a small bit of a girl and was so very boyish in form and appearance that the President often said that I made him think of Willie. These thoughts were the occasion of the great tears that I saw so often course down his cheeks."

GREAT MEN WEEP.

"In my time I have seen three great men weep. The first of these was Lincoln when he thought of his dead son. The second, some fifteen years later, was Jefferson Davis. At that time I had been married for a short time to General Hoxey, and we were stationed at Montgomery, Ala. Jefferson Davis visited Montgomery, and met with such an ovation by the citizens as is rarely tendered any man. It was almost his last appearance. So spontaneous and heartfelt was this ovation that it greatly moved this president of a lost cause. When he arose to respond to the greetings he was overcome by the feeling he had evidently aroused in these people of his own Southland. He broke down and sobbed like a child."

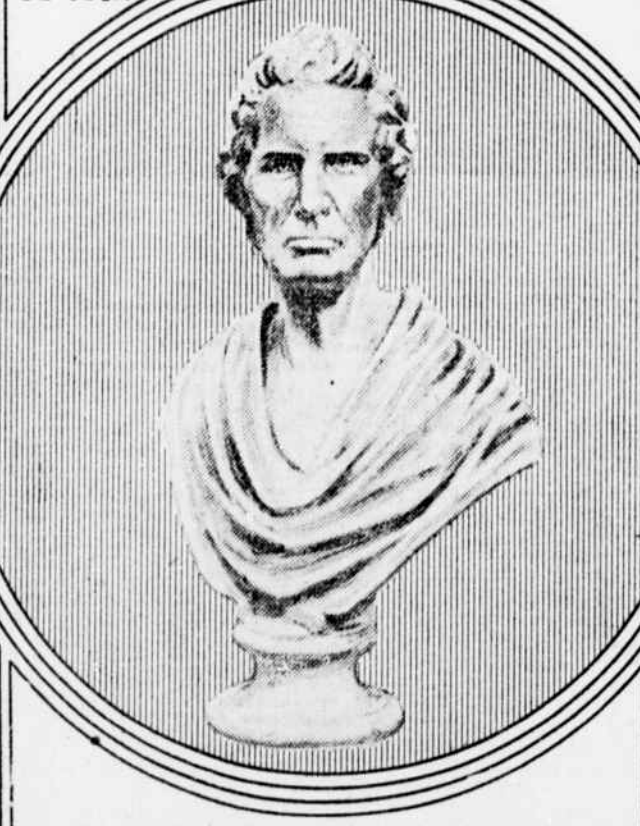
"Only a few years ago, at the close of

five months when Lincoln was killed. The little artist was at home on that terrible night, and her parents had been to the theatre. They returned toward midnight and told her of the tragic death of her great friend. It was a long time before she recovered from the shock, but it had only the effect of intensifying within her the image and the mournful impressions that had been left by the martyred President.

It was not long after this that Congress decided that it should have for the Rotunda in the Capitol the figure of Lincoln done in marble. It asked the great artists of the world to submit models for this statue. There were scores of competitors, and among them this girl, then eighteen years of age, submitted the clay model that she had so studiously made of the great President in his very presence. She of them all had caught the spirit of the man, and her model appealed to those who knew him best as being the thing that would perpetuate him as he really was and hand down to posterity the actual Lincoln.

After a month of waiting the committee reported its finding. Little Vinnie Ream had secured the commission from the United States government to make in mar-

THE VINNIE REAM STATUE OF LINCOLN IN THE ROTUNDA OF THE CAPITOL.



THE BUST THAT VINNIE REAM MADE OF THADDEUS STEVENS.

PROFILE VIEW OF LINCOLN STATUE BY VINNIE REAM.



VINNIE REAM AS SHE SCULPTURED LINCOLN.

the Lincoln statue. During the time I spent in the Capitol modelling this figure I was thrown constantly with men prominent in public life. Almost all the Senators and Representatives were deeply interested in the work and were constant visitors at the studio. Friend and foe gathered there with a common interest—the success of my work. In the bright and rambling discussions of men and things there were many tales of the war—its privations, its hardships and sufferings—by the gallant soldiers who came to see how the statue was progressing.

"Some came on crutches and told how farther and son, brother and brother, had met upon the battlefield only to die in each other's arms. I heard stories of prison life, of men who were shot to the heart at Shiloh or perished in the

When the Vinnie Ream statue of Lincoln was unveiled in the Capitol in 1871 Senator Carpenter, of Wisconsin, summed up the satisfaction of the American Congress in his description of the work that she had produced. He said:

"Those who have visited the studio of this artist and seen various classic works that she has produced have no doubt that she would have been capable of embodying in a statue of Lincoln a creditable conception of Jupiter hurling thunderbolts or of Cleopatra in a Roman toga amid classic surroundings. Thus she might have produced a fable in marble, befitting which no man could say where Lincoln stepped and Jupiter commenced, nor distinguish that which represented the fact from that which represented the fancy of the artist. Thus she might have cheated her employers and have labelled the great departed, and her statue might have been placed in the Capitol amid the hosannas of artists, while an Illinois neighbor could not detect the remotest resemblance to the plain old man with whose incomings and outgoings he had been familiar for years."

"Our artist was aware that no flattery was expected at her hands. When the people employed her to execute this work they were in no mood for dissembling. What they wished was an exact likeness of Abraham Lincoln, the half-farmer, half-lawyer, and altogether child of Nature, with a face sadder than was ever worn by man before. The artist has made an exact copy of the rough casket in which God lodged one of the brightest jewels since the beginning of time. She most heartily deserves the thanks of the Congress of these United States."

SUBSEQUENT WORK.

So was the most delicate task that Congress has ever assigned to an artist accomplished. So was a young girl started on a career of art that is almost without parallel in America, for that career has been more bound up in the public life of the nation than any other.

When Vinnie Ream asked to model a bust of Lincoln from life the President flatly refused. He said that he had been submitting to too many pictures. He insisted that there was no reason why any one should want to make the likeness of so homely a man. He would hear nothing of it. Her friends urged that she was but a girl, was ambitious, wanted to model him of all else; that she was poor. That she was poor and without influence was the point that decided Lincoln. He would sit for this poor girl with naught but her ambition, but he would sit for no other.

At the time and during the years she was making the clay model at the Capitol this slip of a girl was studying and working assiduously. Consumed with the passion for her work, her small frame as full of strength and vigor as that of a boy, she toiled night and day. During that time she made busts of many of the great men with whom she was associated. Most notable among these was the bust of Thaddeus Stevens, of Pennsylvania, the most powerful man in Congress in reconstruction times and her staunch advocate. While working upon the Lincoln statue in Rome much opportunity for study was given, and busts were made of other celebrated personages. Cardinal Antonelli, one of the most unapproachable men of recent times, consented to sitting for a bust upon the request of the little American sculptor. Next is another great man whom she has done in marble. But her final masterpiece, next to the Lincoln statue, was to be, like the first, done upon order of the United States Congress. It was to be an heroic statue of Admiral David Glasgow Farragut, to be placed in Farragut Square, Washington, which Congress was dedicating to this great naval hero.

Artists were asked to submit models for

THE FARRAGUT MONUMENT.

Wilderness; of men who went down at Antietam, fell at Winchester or marched with Sherman to the sea. The studio, with its circular walls and high arched ceiling, was lighted by a huge fireplace of the olden times, the last one left at the Capitol. It occupied one entire side of the room, and was kept blazing with logs six feet or more in length. It was supported on each side by marble statues and was so fascinating that it was no wonder that the old soldiers lingered there. It was their campfire, and as the glow from the blazing hearth lighted up the clay image the name Lincoln was ever on their lips. There

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